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July 27, 2004

The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch  
United States Senate  
104 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510-4402

RECEIVED

Re: Petition to the FCC and Congress

AUG 23 2004

Federal Communications Commission  
Office of the Secretary

Dear Senator Hatch:

PETITION TO THE FCC AND CONGRESS

As our nation's public square, television plays a critical role in the democratic discourse of our country. It is high time that broadcasters do their part to enhance civic participation, instead of simply profiteering on politics.

The FCC -- as steward of the public's airwaves -- has a golden opportunity and a responsibility to adopt a clearly defined public interest standard that would ensure that broadcasters air, at a minimum, three hours per week of civic or electoral affairs programming. The public interest obligations should be defined before the FCC considers any action on "must-carry."

The airwaves belong to the public and, for three-quarters of a century, broadcasters who use them have been obligated to serve the public interest. Yet the FCC has left it to broadcasters to define this obligation, resulting in a race to the bottom.

In the coming age of digital TV, broadcasters will be able to transmit six times as much programming over the public airwaves. I believe that:

"Before allowing broadcasters to profit even more from public airwaves, the FCC must define minimum standards for broadcasters to fulfill their public interest obligation through coverage of elections and civic affairs."

Sincerely,

*Paula Aoki*

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